



CATAWBA COUNTY

P.O. Box 389 100-A South West Boulevard Newton, North Carolina 28658-0389
www.catawbacountync.gov

Telephone: 828-465-8201
Fax: 828-465-8392

RETIRED CATAWBA COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL WINS PRESTIGIOUS LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

David Pruitt, who served as Catawba County's Fire Marshal from 2002 until his retirement in June 2008, has been presented with a prestigious award for lifetime achievement from the North Carolina Fire and Life Safety Educational Council. Pruitt was named the third person ever to receive the B.T. Fowler Lifetime Achievement Award during the Council's recent annual conference in Greenville, NC.

"David Pruitt has served the fire service since June 1975," said Terri Byers, Fire Education Specialist, with the City of Hickory and David Watson, Fire Educator with the City of Conover, who nominated Pruitt for the award. "Although officially retired, he continues to teach fire prevention programs throughout the county.

During his thirty years, he has been a volunteer firefighter with Mountain View Fire Department and worked as Inspector and Fire Marshal with Catawba County Fire Marshal's Office. However, the position that appears closest to his heart has always been Fire Educator.

"Even when fire education was not the cool thing to do, David started teaching fire safety programs for the public because it was the right thing to do," Byers and Watson added. "Through the years, he has used various methods to get his message to the public including burnt objects, puppets, robots, and computers to teach his safety advice. We have often been amazed at how he uses these items to make his point and keep the learner interested. One such example occurred when he used the Patches robot to teach high school students about fire safety. He used the song "Who Let The Dogs Out?" and had the students dancing with him (the robot) and then talking about fire safety.

Pruitt had been involved in the fire service as a volunteer for five years and wanted to get more involved on a professional level when he came to work with Catawba County Government. He began working with the County as a volunteer fire inspector/educator with the Fire Marshal's Office before being named to a full time position as inspector and fire educator in 1980. Pruitt has been a member of the Mountain View Fire Department for over 30 years, including service as Assistant Chief.

"I worked with David Pruitt for 3 years before he retired and I don't know that I have ever met a person more dedicated to the Fire Service in my entire life," said Mark Pettit, Fire and Rescue Manager for Catawba County who assumed Pruitt duties on his retirement. "His commitment to the Fire Service as a whole is an inspiration to anyone that has the opportunity to speak with him. His impact on the Fire Service in Catawba County will be felt for many years to come."



Retired Catawba County Fire Marshal David Pruitt, center, recently received the B.T. Fowler Lifetime Achievement Award from the North Carolina Fire & Life Safety Educational Council, from Tommy Curry, Chair of the Council (right) with B.T. Fowler, retired Captain with the Raleigh Fire Department, for whom the award is named (at left).

The Catawba County Firefighter's Association and Insurance Underwriters Association recognized Pruitt as Catawba County Firefighter of the Year in 1983. He was one of several persons who were instrumental in opening the Catawba County Firefighter's Museum.

"One of the most extraordinary ways he has reached the public was by utilizing the Catawba County Firefighters Museum," Byers and Watson said in their nomination. "By leading a team of firefighters to build the museum, David also created a place for citizens to learn fire prevention methods they can take to protect their family, homes, and businesses. The museum is a unique opportunity to show the public the past and ways we can learn from it."

Pruitt and his wife of 35 years, Susan, live in the Mountain View community. Their daughter, Shannon, is employed by the Catawba County Public Health, and is married to Blake Bowers. Their son, Jason, and his wife Jennifer, live in Conover. The Pruitts have three grandchildren, Addison, Chatham, Jacie.

Pruitt collects Craftsman tools and Kodak cameras, with over 300 models of cameras displayed in his home office (ranging from 1902 to current day models).

"I am very humbled and honored to be this year's recipient of the BT Fowler Lifetime Achievement Award," Pruitt said. "There are many people in the Fire & Life Safety Education field that are very worthy of this recognition. I am very pleased that my friends and educator counterparts in the area nominated me and felt like I deserved this honor."

The B.T. Fowler Lifetime Achievement Award was first presented in 2007. Nominees must be a member of an organization or agency that promotes fire and life safety education and participates with a regional Fire & Life Safety Educator group. B.T. Fowler, the first recipient of the award named in his honor, served the Raleigh Fire Department as Captain for 35 years. He was a founding member of the Council and continues to be active with today, having contributed over 50 years of service to the fire and life safety education cause.

"There is no doubt that David met his calling in life and that was to be in the Fire Service," said David Weldon, Catawba County Emergency Services Director. "In the 17 years, I worked with David nothing was more important to him than his family and the Fire Service. His selfless desire to help others was the cornerstone of everything he did. He truly enjoyed educating others, especially children in fire safety. His positive influence on Fire Protection and Education in this County is immeasurable. It was truly a privilege to have worked with David over the years and I can't think of anyone more deserving of this award."

"David has been a force and a mentor for education in Catawba County, not only by serving as Fire Marshal but by leading firefighters to do the right thing and showing them they can have fun and be creative in the process," said Terri Byers and David Watson as they concluded their nomination.